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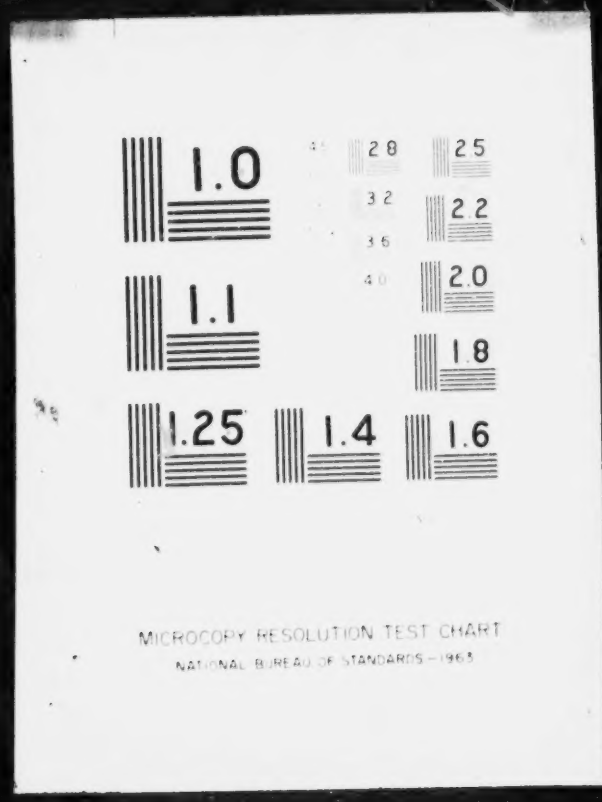

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APPLICABLE LINGUISTICS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS.

BY- GLADNEY, FRANK Y.

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TRADITIONALLY OR OTHERWISE NONLINGUISTICALLY ORIENTED LANGUAGE TEACHERS WILL FIND IN THE NEW GENERATIVE-TRANSFORMATION GRAMMAR A REFUTATION OF MANY OF THE CURRENTLY ACCEPTED LINGUISTIC (SPECIFICALLY STRUCTURALIST) TEACHINGS AND A CONFIRMATION OF SOME TRADITIONAL IDEAS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING. FOR INSTANCE, THE TRADITIONAL SPELLING OF ENGLISH (ALSO OF RUSSIAN) IS PHONEMIC IN A NEWER SENSE OF THE WORD. PHONOLOGY SHOULD BE BROADENED TO INCLUDE PART OF MORPHOLOGY, THE REST OF MORPHOLOGY BELONGING PROPERLY TO SYNTAX. THE REPUTED OPPOSITION OF THE TRADITIONAL GOALS OF READING AND TRANSLATING TO AUDIOLINGUAL GOALS IS THUS PUT IN THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE. THIS ARTICLE IN PUBLISHED IN THE "ILLINOIS JOURNAL OF EDUCATION," VOLUME 57, NUMBER 6, WHOLE NUMBER 534, OCTOBER 1966. (AUTHOR)

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APPLICABLE LINGUISTICS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS*

FRANK Y. GLADNEY, *Assistant Professor of Russian*,
University of Illinois, Urbana

You should have heard the groans when Professor Noam Chomsky of M.I.T. told the Northeast Conference earlier this year that language was not a "habit structure" and that it was not acquired with the help of "analogy" to a fixed set of "patterns."[1] Structural linguistics had held these tenets for a generation in the battle against traditional grammar and had won a solid foothold in language teaching. Was it all wrong? Was it to be scrapped now in favor of transformational grammar? The question is misleading. A revolution in linguistics, as the ideas emanating from M.I.T. over the past decade have been called, need not entail a revolution in the teaching of language. Whatever the "state of flux" in linguistics and psychology which prevents them in Professor Chomsky's view from supporting a "technology" of language teaching, teachers must go on teaching; and, as they teach, they must inform themselves of the findings of linguistics, both structural and transformational, and assess their relevance to pedagogic practice. These remarks are offered as a discussion of some of the issues which divide structural linguists from traditionalists on the one hand and from transformational grammarians on the other.

LANGUAGE IS SPEECH, NOT WRITING

This structuralist slogan need not be divisive. To tout speech as "the primary aspect of human linguistic behavior," as Professor Robert A. Hall, Jr., of Cornell does,[2] is apt to incur the enmity of traditionalists and of teachers chiefly engaged, say, in teaching literature. What is needed is a statement that says no more than that the dawn of wisdom in any work with language is distinguishing between speech and spelling, between marks on paper, and that remarkable competence which makes us uniquely human. The point is easily appreciated by any language teacher or linguist and is in no way controversial. We cannot say the same for the inferences drawn hence by some structuralists concerning conventional spelling. Let me quote from a book by Professor Hall which Dr. Procunier has already recommended to the readers of this journal (April, 1965, p. 25): "Where there is a conventional orthography that has become petrified and no longer represents the actual phonemes of modern speech (as in English, French, Spanish, etc.), phonemic analysis and transcription helps to point up the true situation and the relation

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[1] Noam Chomsky, "Linguistic Theory" in *Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Reports of the Working Committees*, ed. Robert G. Mead, Jr. (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1966), pp. 43—9.

[2] Robert A. Hall, Jr., "Fact and Fiction in Grammatical Analysis," *Foundations of Language*, vol. 1, no. 4 (November, 1965), p. 343.

between writing and speech."[3] Now just how one "represents the actual phonemes of modern speech" is very much at the focus of attention in current linguistic research, and whether or not we share the structuralist's low estimate of conventional spelling depends on how we use the term phonemic. This in turn depends on our theory of language. A brief discussion is in order.

TRANSCRIPTIONS: PHONETIC, "PHONEMIC," AND PHONEMIC

To begin with, all linguists believe in a phonetic transcription. All agree that an utterance can be represented in such a way as to record all the audible features which speakers of a language regularly and systematically employ. It is the written version of what we model for our students to imitate, and its importance is self-evident. Further, all linguists agree that there should be a more abstract, nonphonetic way of representing utterances, since—and here the consensus gets a bit shaky—some of the phonetic features recorded in the transcription are in a sense more important than others. The structuralist follows a "rigorous procedure of analysis" to sift out the less important features and thus arrives at the "phonemic" level of representation. Methodological rigor for a structuralist demands that he keep the levels separate and that at the level of meaning-distinguishing units (phonemes) he make no reference to meaning-bearing units (morphemes), which are handled at the morpheme level. Starting from the phonetic record he works up to the "phonemic" level and thence to the morphemic and syntactic levels.

A transformationalist operates with quite different assumptions. He seeks to explain why certain strings of sounds go with certain meanings and tries in this way to capture what the fluent speaker knows about his language. A sentence is thought of as having a deep structure, which determines what it means, and a surface structure, which determines how it sounds. The central component of a grammar is syntax, which comprises phrase structure (roughly, that which is shown by diagramming) and the rules, called grammatical transformations, which change deep structures into surface structures. Phonology comprises the rules which specify how surface structures are to be pronounced. It is thus an appendage of the syntax and an integral part of the grammar.

To make this more concrete consider how the two would approach a problem in phonology. A structuralist observes the Russian utterance [nóš] (the "open *o*" is like the vowel *ought*; the hačeк over the *s* has the value of "h" in *ship, chair,* etc.). After examining enough samples of Russian he concludes that accented *o* is always open. This permits him to "phonemicize" the record to /nós/. The open quality of the Russian *o* is not judged "phonemic" because it is always present and therefore predictable. Now the tranformationalist agrees that what is predictable should not be regarded as phonemic, but in deciding what can be predicted he does not observe the structuralist's ground rules. He looks around at the other forms of the word for 'knife' in Russian, [nažá], [nažóm], etc., and argues that the final [š] in [nós] is also predictable, given a rule that changes voiced consonants like ž into their voiceless counterparts at the end of a word. This appeal to the morpheme level prompts the structuralist to charge that the transformationalist is "mixing his levels." But the transformationalist recognizes no such procedural constraints. He insists that his phonemic representation, regardless of how he arrives at it, be

[3] Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Linguistics and Your Language* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), p. 92.

judged solely on the basis of how well it accounts for the facts, that it be judged, in short, like any other scientific theory. Thus the structuralist claims that his method is rigorous, hence scientific, while the transformationalist counters that his goals are more like those traditionally set in scientific work. Understandably, much has been written of late about the nature of science.

A key argument was stated several years ago by Professor Morris Halle of M.I.T. He charged that the structuralist's "phonemic" level, arrived at by analytic procedures, was more of an encumbrance on the phonological description of a language than a necessity, since it often entailed the splitting of a single rule of pronunciation into two parts, applied at two different levels. Take Russian for example. On the higher nonphonetic level fairly well represented by conventional spelling, Russian sounds include a palatalized (softened) *d*, its voiced counterpart palatalized *d*, and *č* (as in *cheese*) but not its voiced counterpart *ǰ* (as in *judge*). However, all four of these sounds actually occur phonetically. Given a pair of Russian sentences *mát' by pošlá* 'the mother would go' and *dóč' by oslá* 'the daughter would go,' both are affected by the rule of pronunciation that voices all consonants immediately before other voiced consonants (technically, only the obstruents), so that what is actually heard is a palatalized [d] in the first sentence and a [ǰ] in the second. It is thus possible to get from the abstract level represented by spelling to the phonetic level through a single application of a general voicing rule. If, however, we insist on a "phonemic" level, we must apply the voicing rule in two steps: once for 'mother' to get from palatalized *t* to palatalized *d* (both "phonemes" of Russian), and now we are at the "phonemic" level; a second time to get from *č* (a "phoneme") to *ǰ* (a variant of a "phoneme" or allophone), before we get to the phonetic level. This is one of the reasons why transformational grammar does not operate with a "phonemic" level between the phonetic level and the higher level which represents morphemes. And since they have only one higher level, transformationalists press into service a temporarily idle term and call it phonemic (used hereinafter without quotes to distinguish it from the structuralist's "phonemic").

PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS

Teachers of Russian should not regard the elimination of the extra level between the phonetic and the phonemic as a serious loss. What the students see in their texts will do service for a phonemic representation for much of the time; the phonetic level is provided by teachers and tapes. We should want students to learn rules like voicing assimilation in their full generality. Dismissing the voiced counterpart of *č* (also of *c* and *x*) as "extra-phonemic" implies a restriction in the application of the rule and shifts attention from the rule itself to a classification of the elements produced by the rule. It is preferable to teach all the phonetic features that students are capable of imitating and absorbing rather than edit out some of them as "nonphonemic." Besides, what is phonemic in Russian and what predictable is a question which is far from settled. My colleague Professor T. M. Lightner is now challenging the long-established teaching that palatalization (softening) of consonants in Russian is phonemic (except for velar consonants and before the vowel *e*) and the fronting of vowels in the vicinity of palatalized consonants is predictable. He is proposing that the facts of Russian pronunciation are accounted for in a more satisfying way if we make the opposite assumption. To be sure the phonetic facts will be in no way altered by a different phonemic interpreta-

tion. Nor is it obvious how our presentation of them will be. Palatalization of consonants will still be a major hurdle on the way toward acquiring an acceptable Russian pronunciation.

IS ENGLISH SPELLING PHONEMIC?

We may now return to the question whether English spelling is phonemic. First of all, even leaving aside totally unsystematic cases like *choir, queue,* etc., no one will deny the fact that English is very often not *phonetic*: take a typical traditional spelling such as in the verb *bite*. (No one, that is, who has taken the first significant step toward becoming a linguist and has realized that the "long *i*" in *bite* is no [i] at all but a diphthong [ay].) Furthermore, the spelling of *bite* is not "phonemic" in the structuralist sense, since in [bayt] itself there is no phonetic basis for positing phonemic /i/. Support for /i/, however, is not far to seek: every user of English knows the forms *bit* and *bitten*. This and numerous other pairs like *contrite* and *contrition, cycle* and *bicycle* suggest that the alternation of "long *i*" and "short *i*" (phonetically, of course, the alternation of [ay] and [I] constitutes an important part of what every speaker knows about the pronunciation of English. Perhaps it will turn out that the phonemic representation of this verb stem is /bit/. There will have to be indications which forms of the verb have "long" /i/ and which have "short," and there must be some quite general rules interpreting "long" in the case of /i/ as [ay] and "short" as [I]. Given such a phonology of English, it can be seen that *bite, bit, bitten* have a fair claim to being considered phonemic spellings, more so, for instance, than the cognate German forms *beissen, biss, gebissen,* where a more phonetic spelling obscures the unity of the root. In any event, traditionalists and others who do not share the structuralist's view of conventional spelling should fight radical spelling reforms at least until the appearance of the long-awaited book by Professors Chomsky and Halle entitled *Sound Patterns of English*.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MORPHOLOGY?

A teacher who must spend the better part of several years teaching declensions and conjugations is understandably puzzled by the new division of grammar into phonology, syntax, and semantics. Does language, which has phonology but no phonemes, have morphemes but no morphology?

For one thing, it was observed that for English a grammar that treated the forms of words (morphology) apart from their arrangement (syntax) failed to capture some fairly obvious generalizations. Every speaker of English knows that two superficially different sentences such as *I bit* and *did I bite?* differ only in that the second is the question version of the first. We can show this by a grammar which includes these rules: questions are formed by putting part of the verb before the subject; affixes attach to the following verb; insert *do* for any unattached affix. The statement can now be represented as *I PAST bite* and the question as *PAST I bite?* which, incidentally, nicely parallels the relationship between *I can sing* and *can I sing?* This tidy treatment of English sentences is possible only if syntax is allowed to deal with units smaller than words—morphemes. Thus, some of morphology now falls under the heading of syntax, the rest, e.g., the rules which specify how *bite* + PAST and *do* + PAST are pronounced, under phonology.

(Parenthetically, when structuralists decry the traditional grammarians' "forcing English into the classical mold," typically illustrated by the fanciful

"paradigm" *a table, of a table, to a table, a table, from* or *by a table, O table!*[4] all that is being ridiculed is the suggestion that English have the same *morphology* as Latin. Just how much *syntax* is shared by *I see a table* and its Latin counterpart is an open question.)

Structuralists customarily divide the subject matter of morphology into the facts which clearly pertain to syntax (inflection or morphology proper) and the facts which can be consigned to a dim extra-grammatical region known as lexicon (derivation or word-formation). One deals with forms of a single word (*bite, bit*), the other with different words (*wise, wisdom*). A teacher may find the separation of inflection from derivation a useful fiction, at least at the beginning stages. Some facts must be imparted immediately if the student is to be able to form sentences: for example, *kladú* 'I put' corresponds to the infinitive *klást'*, the genitive singular *dnjá* 'day' corresponds to the nominative singular *dén'*. It is perhaps less crucial for the student to see the relation between *čtú* 'I honor' and the noun *čést'* 'honor.' He may learn them as unrelated words. Yet there is no reason why he *must* do so. The same phonological rules operate for derivation as for inflection: a single rule changes the *d* of *kladú* and the *t* of *čtú* to *s* before *-t'*, and a single rule inserts *e* in both *dén'* and *cést'* (true, with some differences). The like can be said for *bite—bit* on the one hand and *wise—wisdom* on the other. In grammar books one often encounters the statement that verbs like *bite—bit* and *kladú—klást'* are irregular, but having rules of more limited application (minor rules) is quite different from having no rules at all. In general teachers would do well to follow the example of linguists and use the term irregular sparingly.

DERIVATION AND THE READER'S PHONOLOGY

In emphasizing that language is speech the structuralist often exaggerates the differences between the traditional goals of reading a language and the goal of speaking it. It would seem more justifiable to speak of methods than of goals. The linguistic part of the argument is predicated on a narrower conception of phonology than that which is being developed in current work. Here is what Professor Nelson Brooks of Yale says about the reading goal: "Typical is the Ph.D. candidate who takes a "cram" course in order to pass his language examination, who knows a certain number of lexical and structural equivalents in the two languages enabling him to comprehend (in the mother tongue) a text written in the second language, but who is lacking in any knowledge of its phonology"[5]. I will leave it to the psychologists to debate the validity of Professor Brooks' parenthesis and comment only on the last phrase. If the lexical items known by the Ph.D. candidate include *čtú* and *čest'* as well as other feminine nouns with the suffix *-t'*, e.g., *strást'* 'passion' (c.f. *stradát'* 'suffer'), *smért'* 'death' (cf. *úmer* 'he died'), he has at his disposal facts which afford some insight into the workings of Russian phonology. In fact, it could be argued that to teach someone to read a language you must teach him many of the same rules as are taught to students learning to speak —only you must teach him to reverse their application. Consider, for example, the English words *promotion* and *conclusion*. Pronouncing them might be thought of as a matter of applying phonological rules to *promote* and *conclude* plus noun suffix *-ion*. Hearing and understanding them, therefore, entails starting with phonetic "promoshun" and "concluzhun" and working backwards with the same rules. Looking at the words in the conventional spelling,

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[5] Nelson Brooks, *Language and Language Learning*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 43.

a foreigner may find *conclusion* easier to pronounce, since the rule /d/ goes to [ž] is reflected in the spelling in a way that the corresponding rule for *promotion*, /t/ goes to [š], is not. By the same token the foreigner may find *promotion* easier to understand: the spelling is more phonemic and the relationship with *promote* less obscured by it.

Or consider a Russian example. Students learning to speak Russian must somehow assimilate a rule which under certain conditions inserts *o* after prepositions and prefixes; thus 'under you' is *pod tobój* while 'under me' is *podo mnój*. This rule is also needed by a student attempting to read *podob'ju* 'I will line (e.g., with fur)' next to *podóbiju* 'likeness (dative singular).' The two forms are confusingly alike only on the surface; their deep structure—i.e., that which expresses their meaning—is for the first form prefix *pod-* plus verbal root *-b'j-* plus verbal ending *-u*, and for the second form prefix *po-* plus noun root *-dob-* plus noun suffix *-ij-* plus case ending *-u*. In interpreting 'I will line' one must learn to ignore the *o* which is inserted by phonological rule.

Turning to syntax we see other instances where the same rule must be known by the person who produces a sentence and the Ph.D. candidate who translates it. Take the sentence *ón právit avtóbusom*. Is it to be translated 'he drives a bus,' ignoring the instrumental ending *-om* on *avtóbus*? Or should we read it 'he drives (someone) by means of a bus'? The question facing the reader is Does the instrumental form of *avtóbusom* in the surface structure signal that in the deep structure it is an expression of instrumentality like, e.g., *ón pišet peróm* 'he writes with a pen'? The answer is no: *právit'* belongs to the class of verbs denoting owning or controlling which take objects in the instrumental case, as any student must know before he can use the verb in a sentence. The first translation is the correct one.

It should be noted that these remarks are addressed to the purely linguistic aspect of the question to the exclusion of the psychological. "Knowing" a rule is intended quite abstractly and does not imply either "active knowledge" or "passive knowledge;" it says nothing about fluency, "thinking in a language," "reading without translating," etc.

DO LINGUISTS OPPOSE PURISM?

Professor Hall calls on linguists to press on in the fight against purism.[6] The final point which I wish to make is that such sociolinguistic predispositions are not good baggage for a student to bring with him to the study of a foreign language. A speech community's attitude towards its language is a product of complex historical factors and cannot be expected to be the same from one community to the next. The speech community of American English is one which does not have a single prestigious dialect which all must emulate in order to pass as cultivated speakers. To bring this point home it suffices to compare the speech of our last two Presidents. In the Soviet Union, however, where half of the two hundred million citizens are native speakers of a language other than Russian, the striving for standardization and avoidance of dialect and other variation make for a linguistic picture which is quite different. It will be recalled that when ex-Premier Khrushchev appeared on television here a few years ago, it was only when the interview ran into overtime and the man began to tire that he slipped from standard *govorít* 'he says' to dialect *hovorít*. A Russian proverb puts it quite nicely: Don't barge into my monastery with your regulations.

[6] Robert A. Hall, Jr., "Fact and Fiction in Grammatical Analysis," p. 343.

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THE COVER STORY

Ray Page, Superintendent of Public Instruction, reviews an issue of *El Puertorriqueño*, a weekly Spanish-language newspaper published in Chicago. Derald Merriman, Foreign Language Curriculum Supervisor, is translating an article which describes a Title III, NDEA, in-service teacher training workshop to Superintendent Page and Paul Woods, Director, Title III, NDEA. This Workshop in Applied Linguistics, conducted by Professor Waldemar Matias at the Chicago Loop Junior College, proved to be an asset to foreign language teachers in the Chicago area.

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